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168 WESTERN RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET. *Regulus satrapa olivaceus*. A very common winter resident.

169 WESTERN GNATCATCHER. *Poliophtila cærulea obscura*. A common migrant, seen occasionally during the winter.

170 RUSSET-BACKED THRUSH. *Turdus ustulatus*. A spring migrant, usually not very abundant.

171 DWARF HERMIT THRUSH. *Turdus aonalaschkæ*. A common migrant and winter resident; much more numerous some years than in others.

172 WESTERN ROBIN. *Merula migratoria propinqua*. A winter resident but very irregular, appearing some winters in flocks of thousands, while in others they are almost entirely absent.

173 VARIED THRUSH. *Hesperocichla nævia*. A winter visitant but of very irregular occurrence.

174 WESTERN BLUEBIRD. *Sialia mexicana occidentalis*. Seen frequently during the winter.

175 MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD. *Sialia arctica*. A winter resident, some years abundant and in others entirely absent.



### Communications.

#### Concerning the Use of Scientific Names.

Mr. Grinnell's article in the January CONDOR (pp. 20, 21) is a very able argument against the exclusive use of scientific names in popular or semi-popular bird books and journals, though the title is misleading, and the reader would suppose, until he reaches the last paragraph but one, that the protest is against their *general* instead of against their *exclusive* use.

No reasonable person can make serious or well-founded objection to the use of vernacular names in such publications; but since there are evidently some one who regard scientific names as wholly superfluous I desire to present one good reason why the latter should *always* be given, whether accompanied by the vernacular name or not.

So far as I am aware, no one has yet desired a better index to the literature of a particular species than a carefully prepared "synonymy", by which I mean not only the various synonyms themselves but also judiciously selected references under each, arranged in chronological or some other methodical sequence. For several years past the collation of references for such a synonymy of the birds of North and Middle America has occupied a very considerable portion of my time, during which there have been numerous occasions to deplore the absence of the scientific name in connection with some note which records a new fact of geographic distribution, habits, or nidification. Necessarily, these have had to be passed by, since vernacular names are unavailable for citation.

It may be urged that vernacular names are citable as well as scientific names. While this is in one sense true, nevertheless it is impracticable, unless the compiler is willing to double his labor and add unnecessarily to the bulk of his book. In other words, since scientific

names *must*, for various paramount reasons, be cited, the addition of vernacular names would but increase the labor of the compiler and still further complicate the typography of the synonymy.

As examples of the two kinds of records one has but to examine the pages of the January CONDOR. On page 19 occurs a record which I have already cited as follows: "*Harporhynchus redeivivus pasadenensis*, GRINNELL, CONDOR, ii, 1900, 19 (Azusa, Los Angeles Co., California; early nesting, etc.)"; but on the opposite page (18) are several equally important records which, because unaccompanied by the scientific names, must remain buried where they now are.

Personally, I am in favor of the use of vernacular names; but by all means let us have the scientific names also.

ROBERT RIDGWAY.

*Brookland, D. C.*

#### Early Collecting Experiences in California.

Pasadena, Cal., Jan. 25, 1900.

*Editor Condor:*—

I have read with great pleasure the interesting article of Mr. Lyman Belding in the January CONDOR. The article interests me particularly because Mr. Belding's difficulties and experiences were very similar to mine in the study of California birds. Like him, I also was in the "dark" a good many years after arriving from Germany and settling in San Francisco. I did not know any ornithologists and the only books of reference I had were German publications of Dr. Brehm (Tierleben), and of Dr. Karl Russ, which of course mentioned Californian birds but sparingly in these editions (1884). In vain I turned to the collection of birds at the Academy of Sciences for help. The chaos I found there at that time was too great, and I found more mounted canaries and European

species than real California birds. These birds had undoubtedly died in bird stores. My investigations around San Francisco and in Golden Gate Park were naturally very limited, and being left to myself, some of my identifications were amusing.

It was not until I moved to Marysville, Yuba county, some years later that I received an "eye-opener." Having studied bird life about Marysville a few months and being able to identify only a few kinds, I concluded to catch as many birds alive as possible and keep them singly in cages or together in a large aviary. This had been a fancy with me since the days of my boyhood, as I liked the birds for their song and seldom cared to shoot them. So I made several traps and set them two or three miles from town in different parts of the river bottoms. I used to walk out mornings and evenings to watch the traps and take the captured birds home. In this way I caught many birds, mostly finches, of which I took good care, losing but few by death. Finally my traps were all stolen by boys, although I had put my name and address on them and requested everyone not to disturb them "for Science's sake!"

In my wanderings through the bushes I had several times met a gentleman who went out duck hunting. He would watch me curiously and no doubt thought there was something wrong with me. He soon found out what it was when we began talking to each other and I showed him an Oregon Towhee with the remark that I had just caught a Black-headed Grosbeak. He was astonished at this (it being winter) and soon set me right. Mr. P. was a great collector himself and had a fine collection of skins. He was personally acquainted with Mr. Belding and encouraged me to write to him. I did so and soon received a courteous answer and Mr. Belding's book, "Land Birds of the Pacific District", with compliments. This valuable work has been a great help to me and became to me the real "key of all keys" in the study of Californian birds. With the aid of this work and those of Ridgway and Coues (of the latter's death I read with deep regret) bird study became comparatively easy, especially as the Sacramento Valley is a veritable paradise for most of our valley birds.

Thus I was enabled to take a good many notes and write descriptions and sketches of Californian birds which I sent to Dr. Karl Russ in Berlin. He received them eagerly and published them in his paper *Die Gefederte Welt*. I had been in correspondence with Dr. Russ before I left Germany and he urged me to study closely our California birds as a number of them were not yet fully known to ornithologists in Germany. Thus through the influence and help of Mr. Belding I was enabled to gratify Dr. Russ' wish. These lines I write only in

honor of the great service Mr. Lyman Belding has rendered Californian ornithology, and undoubtedly there are others to whom he has been of the same help as to me. May he be able to long continue his valuable work!

Respectfully yours,

(REV.) F. REISER.



### Measurements of the Santa Cruz Jay.

I would like to call attention to some errors in 'Ridgway's Manual' concerning the measurements of *Aphelocoma insularis*, which must have arisen from a scarcity of material at the time of taking them. Examination of thirty-six male and twenty-six female specimens collected by myself on Santa Cruz Island shows that there is quite a difference between the ♂ and ♀ of this species. For instance, the wing measurements are, ♂, 5.00 to 5.72, average 5.32, and ♀ 4.84 to 5.34, average 5.14, whereas 'Ridgway's Manual' gives, irrespective of sex, 5.20—5.30 (5.27). The extremes of tail measurements show ♂ 6.00—7.15, ♀ 6.00—6.60, instead of 6.05—6.25. The culmen in our series also shows great sex variation: viz: ♂ 1.14—1.47 (1.28), ♀ 1.12—1.26 (1.22), while the 'Manual' shows for both sexes 1.15—1.30 (1.22).

The greatest depth of bill in both sexes is .51 inches, while the least ♂ is .47 and least ♀ .44, averaging .49 and .47 respectively. The greatest breadth of bill is also the same, viz: .53, but the least is ♂ .48, ♀ .44, average .50 and .48. The extremes of tarsus are the same in both sexes as well, being 1.61—1.78, but the averages are ♂ 1.70, ♀ 1.67, 'Ridgway's Manual' giving 1.70—1.80 (1.75) inches. These corrections, except as a matter of accuracy, are of no great importance unless an *Aphelocoma* should be found upon the neighboring island of Santa Rosa which might measure differently. I was unable to land upon Santa Rosa Island myself and have seen no record of any jay from there. As this island is only four miles from Santa Cruz Island, it is exceedingly probable that *A. insularis* exists there also.

JOSEPH MAILLIARD.

San Geronimo, Cal.